



North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

State Historic Preservation Office

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Pat McCrory  
Secretary Susan Kluttz

Office of Archives and History  
Deputy Secretary Kevin Cherry

December 8, 2016

Ms. Karla Rosenberg  
Durham Historic Preservation Commission  
101 City Hall Plaza  
Durham NC 27701

RE: Little River High School, Bahama, Durham County

Dear Ms. Rosenberg:

Enclosed is a copy of the nomination for the Little River High School, which is scheduled for presentation to the North Carolina National Register Advisory Committee on February 9, 2017. A copy of the notification letter sent to the property owner is enclosed for your information.

As a Certified Local Government, you normally have sixty (60) days in which to comment on the proposed nomination. If you do not respond by February 9, 2017 on the proposed nomination, approval of it will be assumed. Please note that **Durham County** is to provide an opportunity for public comment on this nomination according to the terms specified in the certification agreement the **County** signed with this office. A copy of your notice to the public should be forwarded to our office along with any comments you wish to make on the nomination to satisfy federal and state requirements. Please use the enclosed comment forms to send us your response.

If you have any questions concerning this nomination, we will be happy to help.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin Cherry".

Dr. Kevin Cherry  
State Historic Preservation Officer

KC/jct: Enclosures

cc: The Honorable Wendy Jacobs, Chair, Board of County Commissioners





## North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

### State Historic Preservation Office

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Deputy Secretary Kevin Cherry

December 8, 2016

Little River Community Complex, Inc.  
P O Box 126  
Bahama NC 27503

RE: Little River High School, Bahama, Durham County

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are pleased to inform you that the nomination of the above-referenced property to the National Register of Historic Places has been scheduled for presentation to the North Carolina National Register Advisory Committee at its meeting on February 9, 2017 in Raleigh. The Committee will decide whether to recommend that I sign the nomination and submit it to the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, for final review and listing in the National Register.

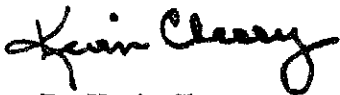
The National Register is the nation's official list of historic buildings, districts, archaeological sites, and other resources worthy of preservation. Enclosed is a set of *National Register Fact Sheets* which includes a list of the criteria under which properties are evaluated. More than 2,700 North Carolina properties are now listed in the National Register. Listing in the National Register places no obligation or restriction on a private owner using private resources to maintain or alter the property. The effects of National Register listing are described on the enclosed *National Register Fact Sheet 1*.

As provided by the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Register program regulations (36 CFR 60) that implement the Act, local officials and all property owners are provided an opportunity to comment on the nomination of their property to the National Register. In addition, *private* property owners have the right to object to listing. If a private property owner chooses to object to the listing of his or her property, the objection must be submitted to me at 4610 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-4610. The procedure for objecting is described on the enclosed *National Register Fact Sheet 5*. We would appreciate receiving comments by February 9, 2017, but statements of objection may be submitted and will be counted until the actual date of listing, which usually takes place at least fifteen days but not more than forty-five days after the nomination is received by the Keeper of the National Register following the National Register Advisory Committee meeting.

When a district nomination is prepared, each property within the district must be categorized as contributing or noncontributing if it contains built resources; vacant properties are not categorized and are not eligible for the benefits of listing. Please see "What the National Register Means for the Private Property Owner" on *National Register Fact Sheet 1* for an explanation of contributing and noncontributing properties. When a historic district is under consideration, a public information meeting within the community is very often held prior to the Advisory Committee meeting.

A copy of the nomination and information on the National Register and Federal tax benefits for historic properties are available from the above address upon request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Cherry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kevin" and last name "Cherry" clearly distinguishable.

Dr. Kevin Cherry  
State Historic Preservation Officer

KC/jct

Enclosures

cc: The Honorable Wendy Jacobs, Chair, Board of County Commissioners

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Little River High School

other names/site number Little River School, Little River Elementary School, Little River Community Complex

### 2. Location

Street & number 8307 North Roxboro Road

☐ not for publication

city or town Bahama

☒ vicinity

State North Carolina code NC county Durham code 063 zip code 27503

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☐ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☐ locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet

☐ determined eligible for the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.

☐ other,

(explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Little River High School  
Name of Property

Durham County, North Carolina  
County and State

### 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4	3	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
5	3	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

n/a

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

n/a

### 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Education: school

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Education: education-related

Other: senior center

### 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Modern Movement

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

roof Rubber

other

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Little River High School  
Name of Property

Durham County, North Carolina  
County and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** moved from its original location.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☒ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
Ethnic Heritage: African American  
Education

### Period of Significance

1939-1969

### Significant Dates

1939, c. 1949, 1953-55, 1957

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

n/a

### Cultural Affiliation

African American

### Architect/Builder

Hackney, George F. (architect)  
Herrin, C. A. (contractor)

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Little River High School  
Name of Property

Durham County, North Carolina  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 36.81 acres

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing  
2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing  
4 \_\_\_\_\_  
☒ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Heather M. Slane and Cheri Szcodronski  
organization hmwPreservation date September 1, 2016  
Street & number P. O. Box 355 telephone 336.207.1502  
city or town Durham state NC zip code 27701

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

## Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

Name Little River Community Complex, Inc. (LRCC)  
Street & number 8307 N. Roxboro Road (Hwy 501) telephone 919.698.3657  
city or town Bahama state NC zip code 27503

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 1

Little River High School  
Durham County, North Carolina

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### Narrative Description:

The Little River High School is located at 8307 North Roxboro Road (US 501) in northern Durham County. Roxboro Road is a four-lane divided highway with a grassy median that extends north from Durham, North Carolina to Roxboro, North Carolina in Person County. The school complex stands approximately eleven miles north of downtown Durham, six miles southwest of the small rural community of Bahama, North Carolina and about one-half mile north of the Little River, for which it is named. It is located on the west side of Roxboro Road roughly in the center of an approximate thirty-seven acre irregularly shaped parcel and faces east toward the intersection of John Jones Road. Constructed to serve the African American students in rural northern Durham County, the school retains its rural context with a heavily wooded parcel to its south, abutting the Little River Reservoir, and open farm fields to the west, north, and across Roxboro Road to the east. A c. 1992 animal boarding facility stands north of the school on the adjacent parcel, but is screened from the school by a row of mature trees that extend along the north property boundary of the school.

The Little River High School stands parallel to Roxboro Road and is set back from the road approximately three-hundred feet on a slight rise. The main school building is accessed from Roxboro Road by a paved circular drive that extends across the front of the main building, forming a grassy island in the middle, dotted with mature trees, and a grassy median between the driveway and Roxboro Road that is planted with a row of trees. Two sets of concrete steps with brick knee walls lead up from the drive to two separate entrances, connected by a sidewalk, for the main and elementary school wings. The driveway connects to a larger irregularly shaped circular gravel drive that wraps around the rear of the complex with a smaller circular gravel drive and parking area in front of the gymnasium on the north end of the complex. A row of mature trees extends the depth of the parcel, just north of the gymnasium and circular drive, separating the school from two large grassy fields immediately to its north. A water tower is located near the tree line northwest of the school. West of the school complex and gravel drive, the west half of the parcel is heavily wooded with two small sheds located within the tree line just west of the school. There is an asphalt basketball court, grassy play field, and a modern playground southeast of the school adjacent to Roxboro Road.

The Little River High School complex consists of five buildings, which include the 1939-40, "H"-shaped main school building with a series of later additions, the 1957 cafeteria and agriculture buildings northwest of the original school building, the 1983 classroom building directly west of the school, and the 1939 caretaker's house south of the school. The buildings, with the exception of the caretaker's house, are connected at the rear by a series of concrete sidewalks covered by flat metal roofs with metal posts.

The main building is a one-story, flat-roofed, brick, modestly decorated school building that overlooks Roxboro Road to the east. The main entrance, centered on the façade, evokes the Classical Revival-style, finished with a cast-stone surround of ashlar blocks and keystone. The 1939-40 school includes an original auditorium projecting from the rear (west) elevation, connecting an original middle-school classroom wing to the west, as well as a ca. 1949 elementary school wing to the south, and a high school wing and gymnasium at the north that date to 1953-55. With the exception of the one-story-with-basement elementary school wing, all of the school buildings are one-story with flat roofs, and brick exteriors. The caretaker's house is typical of domestic architecture with a gabled roof and sided exterior.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 2

Little River High School  
Durham County, North Carolina

### 1. Little River School 1939-40; c. 1949; 1953; 1954-1955 Contributing Building

*The description begins with the front of the 1939-40 building, describing the exterior, then the interior before proceeding in the same fashion to describe the auditorium and middle-school portions of the building. It then describes the c. 1949 elementary wing followed by the 1953 high school wing and 1954-55 gymnasium. Because there are multiple components to the Main Building, the different areas are labeled with letters in the description and on the attached map.*

#### 1a. Main Building (1939-40)

The one-story, flat-roofed, rectangular massed, brick, Classical Revival-style school is constructed in a running bond brick pattern with a brick foundation reported to be from the original 1935 building, which burned in the Spring of 1939. The building is fifteen bays wide and features a double-loaded corridor aligned parallel with the façade, resulting in a three-bay-wide north elevation. The flat roof is obscured by a brick parapet with painted metal coping and the parapet features decorative dark brickwork used to create a zig-zag pattern on the façade. All windows in this portion of the building are replacement, double-hung, metal-framed windows (installed about 1970) with brick sills and solid metal panels at the top of each opening. A continuous brick header-course band forms the lintels above the windows. The center three bays of the fifteen-bay-wide façade project slightly and feature single windows flanking a further projecting entrance bay, each of which is topped with checkerboard-patterned brick panel, made with light and dark brick, and framed by a band of header and rowlock brick on the side. The entrance, which features replacement paired aluminum-framed glass doors with a one-light transom above, is recessed with cast stone blocks framing the opening. It is accessed by a concrete stair with brick knee walls with concrete caps. Flanking the three-bay pavilion are six pairs of windows with a brick pilaster between the third and fourth bays on each side. The outermost ends of the façade each project slightly with the same checkerboard pattern in the parapet that is found above the entrance.

The south elevation of the main building is largely obscured by the addition of the c. 1949 elementary wing, but retains the header-course belt course above a pair of windows on its east end. An original entrance centered on this elevation now opens to the interior hallway of the c. 1949 education wing. The rear (west) elevation of the main building is simpler in detail, lacking the decorative brickwork in the parapet, but matching the façade in the form and fenestration with six pairs of windows on each side of the Auditorium wing, which extends from the center of the rear elevation, aligned with the three-bay entrance on the façade. There is a low, shed-roofed storage wing projecting from the west elevation, south of the auditorium, that has an entrance on its south elevation. The north elevation of the main building retains the three-bay configuration, though has been altered to accommodate the buildings later use as a doctor's office. It features fixed, multi-light, aluminum-framed windows in the original openings flanking paired, aluminum-framed glass doors with one-light transom centered on the elevation. Faux-stone surrounds the entry and it is sheltered by a hipped metal roof portico on square wood columns.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 3

Little River High School  
Durham County, North Carolina

The main building was originally constructed with a double-loaded, north-south corridor, four equally-sized classrooms on the west side of the hallway, flanking the auditorium, and two classrooms, two offices, a workroom, and two bathrooms on the east side of the hallway, bisected by a center hall that leads from the main entrance to the north-south lateral hallway and auditorium entrance. The southern portion of the building, including the entrance hall and the classrooms to its south, remains largely intact with its original floor plan and historic finishes. The hallways have original wood wainscot with chair rail and several bulletin boards with original wood frames. There are twelve-light-over-one-panel wooden doors with one-light transoms and borrowed light windows between the hallway and each classroom. Floor and ceiling finishes have been replaced with composite tile floor and stick-on acoustic tiled ceiling respectively. The classrooms also retain original wood wainscot with chair rail as well as bulletin and chalkboards with original, intact wood frames. Classrooms have wood floors and stick-on acoustic tiled ceilings. Almost all the radiators are covered with lattice-wood cases, but some are uncovered. The building retains florescent lighting and electrical run through conduit over existing walls and woodwork.

To the immediate south of the main entrance are two offices, which together, with adjoining storage areas, are roughly the size of a typical classroom. The offices have finishes matching those of the hallway including original wood wainscot with chair rail, composite tile floor, and stick-on acoustic tiled ceiling. Radiators are covered with lattice-wood cases and a double-wide doorway between the two offices has been converted to a single door with full-height sidelights. Restrooms in this wing retain original tile on the floor and walls.

The north end of the building has been significantly altered to accommodate its use as a doctor's office. With the exception of a small room at the south end, adjacent to the entrance hall, which has original wood wainscot with chair rail, no historic fabric remains. The walls have been removed and a new layout created with two parallel halls running north-south that access rooms on the east and west elevations of the wing as well as a number of rooms at the center of the building. Reception spaces in the two hallways are accented by curved walls. This portion of the building has carpeted floors, drywall on the walls, hollow-core plywood doors with metal frames, and dropped acoustic-tile ceilings.

### 1b. Auditorium (1939-1940)

The one-story, flat-roofed auditorium extends from the center of the west (rear) elevation of the main building. It is four bays deep on both the north and south elevations, each featuring three bays of windows and one door. Replacement windows are typical, matching those on the main building, paired one-over-one metal-framed windows with solid metal panels at the top. The building has a running bond brick veneer, brick windowsills, and a brick parapet with metal coping. There is a brick smokestack the southeast corner of the auditorium, where the auditorium intersects the main building, resulting in a single window at the east end of the south elevation. There are contemporary metal-framed glass doors at the west end of the north and south elevations of the auditorium, each sheltered by a metal, hipped roof supported by wooden knee brackets.

The interior of the auditorium is accessed via paired three-panel wooden doors from the hallway of the main building, immediately opposite the main entrance. It has a composite tile floor applied over the original wood floors, dropped acoustic-tile ceiling, original plaster walls with a wood chair rail, and projecting plaster pilasters between the paired windows. While the room is generally open, several frame partition walls that do not extend

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Little River High School  
Durham County, North Carolina

to the full height of the auditorium have been constructed at the east end of the auditorium to create additional classrooms. On the west end of the auditorium is a raised stage with plaster walls and original wood flooring. Steps, added in the late 1960s, extend the full width of the stage. Three-panel doors flanking the stage open to small hallways that connect to the main transverse hallway of the middle school wing. The north hallway retains original wainscot with chair rail and a stair, with wainscot-covered railing that leads to the stage door. The stair has been removed from the south hallway and the entrance to the stage sealed off, though the wainscot remains.

### 1c. Middle School Wing (1939-1940)

A five-classroom rectangular massed wing, used for the middle-school grades, stands parallel to the main school building. Located to the west, it is connected to the main school building by the auditorium, which extends into the middle school wing with the stage occupying space equivalent to one classroom. This middle-school wing matches the main building, with a running bond brick veneer and brick parapet with painted metal coping. It has paired double-hung metal windows with fixed solid metal panels at the top, brick sills, and header-course brick lintels that are integrated within a continuous belt course. There are three bays each flanking the auditorium on the east elevation and nine bays on the west elevation. An entrance, centered on the south elevation, and recessed within a projecting bay, has paired aluminum-framed glass doors with a one-light transom. The opening is framed with a header and soldier course and is accessed by concrete steps with brick knee walls, concrete caps, and metal railings. Paired windows that originally flanked the entrance on the south elevation have been bricked in, though projecting brick sills remain. The north elevation has been obscured with the construction of the 1954 high school wing.

The interior of the middle school wing historically matched the main building with plaster walls over wood wainscoting in the hallways and classrooms, wood-framed bulletin boards and chalkboards, and twelve-light-over-one-panel doors with one-light transoms leading from the hallway to the classrooms, all features which remain. The wing has been updated with carpet in the hallways, composite tile floor in the classrooms, and dropped acoustic tile ceilings, installed below stick-on-tile ceilings in the classrooms and hallways and covering the metal panels at the tops of the windows. Borrowed light windows between the hallway and classrooms are also partially obscured by the dropped ceilings. Original radiators remain throughout, some with lattice-wood coverings, and some classrooms retain wood shelves and hooks at the rear of the room for hanging coats.

### 1d. Elementary Wing (c. 1949)

The elementary wing was likely constructed for the 1949-50 school year, when the principal's reports indicate an increase from seventeen to twenty classrooms.<sup>1</sup> The one-story-with-basement elementary wing connects to the south end of the main school building with classrooms for the first grade located on the ground floor and second and third grade classrooms on the upper level.<sup>2</sup> The wing is four bays wide with a brick veneer and a flat roof behind a brick parapet with metal coping. It is offset from the main building, set back just beyond the eastern-most bay of the south elevation of the main building and projecting beyond the west elevation of that

<sup>1</sup> "Little River High School." High School Principal's Annual Reports. State Department of Public Instruction. State Archives, Raleigh. 1949-50.

<sup>2</sup> Wanda Carrington and Brenda McEachin, interview by Heather Wagner Slane and Cheri Szcodronski on May 17, 2016.

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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Little River High School  
Durham County, North Carolina

building. It utilizes the slope of the lot to allow for a full basement level below the main level, which aligns with that of the main school building. Like the main building, the wing has a brick exterior constructed in a running bond with a header-course window lintels that form a belt-course along the upper floor of the building and darker brick used to create a zig-zag pattern in the parapet on the façade. Original paired eight-over-eight-over-four, metal-sash windows remain throughout this wing, all with operable center sashes and projecting brick sills. Basement-level windows are lacking brick headers.

The four-bay-wide façade features three pairs of windows at both the main- and basement levels and a main-level inset entrance on the north end. The entrance, a paired, two-light, aluminum-framed door with one-light transom, is accessed by an exterior brick stair with brick kneewall with concrete coping. It is recessed within a brick opening that has a header-course lintel and is framed with a soldier-course brick band. A simple brick opening at the base of the exterior stair leads to a basement-level entrance with metal-framed glass door. The south end of façade projects slightly with a brick checkerboard panel in the parapet with header- and rowlock-course brick frame, matching that on the main building. The south elevation is asymmetrical with the west side extending further south than the east side to accommodate additional classrooms on that side of the building. It has a centered entrance on the basement level leading to a double-loaded corridor. The paired, two-light, aluminum-framed door with one-light transom is not recessed like the main entrance, but is sheltered by a flat metal roof portico supported by a brick wall on the east side of the entry with six small square openings. Single windows on the south elevation light the stairwell and second-floor hall. The west elevation is six bays wide with identical fenestration on the main and basement levels. The center four bays have paired windows while the first and sixth bays are single windows.

The interior of the two-story elementary wing features a double-loaded corridor with three rooms on each level (two on the west side of the hall and one on the east side), a stair and basement-level entrance at the southeast corner, and a hall at the northeast corner that allows access to the main-level entrance on the façade as well as to the main building. The wing features linoleum tile floors with carpet in the first floor hallway and stairwell, plaster walls in the classrooms and hallways, and stick-on acoustic tile ceilings. Like those in the main building, doors to the classrooms are nine-light-over-two-panel wood doors with one-light transoms and there are additional operable borrowed light windows between the hallways and classrooms. Classroom door trim and wood baseboards are simple, flat-board trim. Classrooms have wood-framed chalk- and bulletin-boards (some have been converted to dry erase boards) and three-panel doors lead to closets. Windows have wood sills, but no trim. The wing retains metal radiators throughout, but with later ceiling fans, fluorescent lighting, and dropped plumbing chases in the first-floor classrooms and stairwell. The south entrance and stairwell have painted brick walls and one-light-over-one-panel metal doors. Matching paired doors provide access from the north hall to the main building.

### 1e. High School Wing (1953)

Constructed in 1953 to house the high school students, the one-story, flat-roofed wing extends north from the middle school wing and includes six additional classrooms and two restrooms. The concrete-block wing was constructed approximately three feet below the level of the middle school wing, following the slope of the site. It has a brick veneer, but is otherwise more modern in design than the 1939-c. 1949 portions of the school. The wing features a one-to-five common bond brick veneer and original metal-framed windows in the west restroom

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 6

Little River High School  
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and modified original windows in the southeast classroom. These grouped windows are six lights tall with operable, pivoting center sashes. Other windows are later replacements in a number of configurations. All windows extend to the roofline, which has metal coping. Entrances in this wing have replacement paired, metal-framed glass doors with one-light transoms above.

The façade is six bays wide with large grouped windows in the three classrooms. The south classroom windows include three pairs of windows separated by narrower, fixed windows that are six lights tall. Some of the windows appear to have had additional mullions added to create the appearance of four-over-four-over-four windows, but the net effect is the appearance of a large forty-eight light window with continuous brick sill. To its north, the east entrance to the wing is sheltered by a hipped metal roof supported by wooden knee brackets. Windows on the north end of the façade have been replaced with two-light fixed metal-framed, storefront-like windows with opaque spandrels above but retain their original openings and brick sills. Windows are paired in the bathroom and office spaces and arranged in groups of nine in the two classrooms spaces. The north elevation of the high school wing abuts the gymnasium, so is fully obscured. The west elevation is six bays wide with an entrance on the north end of the elevation with paired doors and opaque transom that opens to a hallway at the northwest corner of the wing. The main entrance, directly opposite the entrance on the east elevation is sheltered by a flat roof on metal posts that covers the walkway between the high school wing and cafeteria. Immediately north of the entrance a restroom retains original paired metal-framed windows. Classroom windows on this elevation are fixed one-light metal-framed, storefront-like windows, arranged in groups of nine, with opaque spandrels above and original openings and brick sills.

The interior layout of the high school wing remains largely intact while finishes have been updated. Entrances on the east and west elevations open to an off-center, transverse, east-west hallway that intersects the north-south, double-loaded corridor. There are three classrooms on each side of the corridor with restrooms immediately north of the east-west hall, an office space between the two northeast classrooms, and a hallway at the northwest, adjacent to the gymnasium, that leads to an entrance on the west elevation. The wing typically has concrete-block walls, carpeted floors in the hallway, composite tiled floors in the classrooms, and dropped acoustic-tiled ceilings throughout, concealed on the exterior by the solid spandrel panels at the tops of the windows. Lockers once lined the hallway, but were removed when the building was converted for use as an elementary school. The hall has solid wood doors, each with a small single light and solid transom, leading to the classrooms. The floor of the hallway ramps up to the south to meet the floor level of the middle school wing, which is slightly elevated. The north end of the hallway has paired doors, matching the classroom doors, which open to the gymnasium.

Classrooms in the high school wing retain original wood trim at the chalkboards and bulletin boards and wood baseboards. Restrooms in this wing retain original tiled floors and wainscot with wall-mounted sinks and metal stall dividers. The wing is currently used for senior programs for the community.

### 1f. Gymnasium (1954-55)

The tall, flat-roofed, rectangular-massed, concrete-block gymnasium faces east, but stands north of the school, attached to the north elevation of the high school wing. Constructed roughly concurrent with the high school wing, the gymnasium has a five-to-one common bond brick veneer, a flat roof with brick parapet, and multi-

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light clerestory windows along the north and south elevations, extending up to the roofline. Clerestory windows are six-over-six-over-three metal-framed windows, with operable middle sashes, arranged in groups of three and separated by five-light fixed windows. Windows on the south elevation have been painted over, but remain in place. Metal letters spell the words "Little River School" and "57" and are affixed to the east elevation, above the entrance.

A one-story, nearly full-width, flat-roofed entrance wing on the east elevation has two sets of centrally located, double leaf, two-light, aluminum-framed doors. The two sets of doors are flanked and separated by two-light sidelights and topped by a three-part transom. The entrance is sheltered by a flat metal roof with metal coping that is supported by full-height brick walls, to create a recessed entrance. Paired four-light metal clerestory windows on the north and south elevations of the entrance wing open to the restrooms and concession area respectively. A one-story, full-width, flat-roofed wing on the west elevation aligns with the west elevation of the high school wing to form a continuous elevation. It houses locker rooms and has single aluminum-framed entrances with one-light transoms on each end of the elevation. Two grouped, clerestory, horizontal light windows extend nearly the full width of the elevation between the entrances, lighting the locker rooms. In addition to the main entrance, paired aluminum-framed doors are located at the northwest, southeast, and southwest corners of the gymnasium, the southwest of which opens to the high school wing.

The interior of the gymnasium has been altered with the removal of the original wood floor, bleachers, and electronic score board c. 1998, but otherwise remains intact. It has exposed concrete-block walls and a plastic tile floor. The roof, which has exposed flush wood sheathing at the roof deck, is supported by exposed metal trusses supported by concrete-block pilasters that extend from the floor up to the bottom of the windows. In the east wing, restrooms and a ticket booth are located to the north of the lobby with a concession area to the south. Interior wood doors are solid wood with transoms over the women's room and concessions room to allow light from the windows into the lobby. The men's room opens to the gymnasium itself so does not have a transom. The lobby, restrooms, ticket and concession areas, and locker rooms all retain exposed concrete-block walls and drywall ceilings. The lobby, ticket, and concession area are carpeted while the restrooms match those in the high school wing with original tiled floors and wainscot, wall-mounted sinks, and metal stall dividers. The locker rooms, most recently used as additional classroom and storage space, were not accessible.

The gymnasium is currently used for community events and there are plans to reinstall a wood floor and bleachers.

### 2. Cafeteria

1957

#### Non-Contributing Building

The 1957 flat-roofed, rectangular massed, brick veneered, concrete-block cafeteria has been significantly altered with the incompatible replacement of the original windows and the partial infill of the window openings with fiber-cement siding. The building, which is located west of the high school, has a five-to-one common bond brick veneer and flat roof with wood and metal coping. Two contemporary, aluminum-framed glass doors on the south elevation are sheltered by a deep, full-width, flat metal roofs supported by metal poles (which extends to

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cover the walkway to the high school wing at the east and the agriculture building at the west). The east and west elevations historically contained grouped metal windows matching the style of historic windows on the high school wing, but those windows were removed about 2000 and vinyl windows and fiber-cement siding have been installed in the wide openings. Likely concurrent with the change in windows, a third entrance on the west elevation, at the northwest corner of the dining room, has paired fiberglass French doors sheltered by a shed roof on square posts. The kitchen and storage areas at the north end of the cafeteria building are irregular in shape with projecting, flat-roofed bays on the north and east elevations. The kitchen and storage end of the cafeteria retain single fixed, three-light, metal-frame windows on the north elevation and on the west elevation, flanking an inset loading dock with concrete floor. It has a low brick chimney, flush with the exterior of the building, at the northeast corner.

The interior of the cafeteria features a large open, dining area on the south end with a kitchen, storage, and mechanical spaces on the north end, accessed by two doors on the north wall of the dining room. The dining and kitchen spaces both retain a terra cotta-tiled floor and ceramic tile wainscot. There is an original cast iron sink for handwashing on the south elevation of the dining room, between the two main entrances, and a dropped acoustic tile ceiling and exposed metal ductwork in the dining room. The kitchen is accessed by two wood doors, each with a single light, and has a tiled wall opening for dish drop, all on the north elevation of the dining room. The kitchen retains the original ceiling height and drywall ceiling, terra cotta-tiled floor, ceramic tile on the lower half of the walls, and light wells in the ceiling to provide additional natural light to the interior of the kitchen. On the north end of the kitchen are a series of small storage rooms accessed by solid wood doors and an original walk-in cooler.

### 3. Water Tower

c. 1957

#### Contributing Structure

A metal water tower stands north of the cafeteria and was constructed to provide water to the school complex. Notes in the Durham County School Board minutes note that there were problems attaining enough water from the wells on site as early as 1935, indicating that an earlier water tower may have been constructed on the site. However, the current tower is not present on a 1955 aerial photo of the property and was likely constructed concurrent with the cafeteria and agriculture buildings.<sup>3</sup>

### 4. Agriculture Building

1957

#### Contributing Building

The 1957 agriculture building was constructed concurrent with the cafeteria and is similar in detail with rectangular-massing, concrete-block construction, five-to-one common bond brick veneer, and a flat roof with

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<sup>3</sup> USDA Historical Aerial Photos, Durham County. Map 6B-20 (1940) and Map 9P-135 (1955), University of North Carolina Geographic Information Systems Services. [www2.lib.unc.edu/reference/gis/USDA/index.html](http://www2.lib.unc.edu/reference/gis/USDA/index.html) (accessed July 2016).



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wood and metal coping at the parapet. The entrance, offset south of the center of the east elevation, has paired, contemporary, two-light, aluminum-framed glass doors and is sheltered by a flat metal roof that extends to the cafeteria building. The large room on the north end of the building is lit with horizontal, three-light, metal-framed windows, on the north, east, and west elevations, located high on the walls and extending up to the roofline. Windows are in groups of two or three. One group of three of windows is located to the east of the centered aluminum-framed door on the north elevation. Windows on the west end of the north elevation, however, have been bricked in, though the outline of the opening remains visible. The south elevation features a group of three, three-pane windows, located closer to the ground and surrounded by original floor-to-ceiling concrete panels.

The interior of the building has a large room on the north end, a smaller room on the south end, and a number of smaller rooms, including the entrance, office, janitor's room, bathroom, and supply room located in line with one another and forming a divider between the two larger rooms. The rooms all feature exposed concrete-block walls, composite tile floors, and dropped acoustic tile ceilings and modern ductwork. The dropped ceilings cover the original exposed ceiling structure, creating the need for light wells in the large room where windows extend up to the roofline. A row of metal posts extend from the north to south end of the building to support the roof and there are solid wood doors with one small square light each separating the rooms.

### 5. Classroom Building/Little Beaver Day Care 1983

#### Non-Contributing Building

Constructed in 1983 as additional classroom space for the Little River Elementary School, the building stands on the site of the former frame home economics building. The one-story, rectangular-massed building has a low-pitched, front-gabled roof with a shed-roofed wing on the east elevation that houses restrooms and storage space. The building has a running bond brick veneer with a soldier-course beltcourse and concrete panels spanning the width of the north and south elevations, just below the roofline and sheltering the slightly inset windows. Windows are fixed and metal-framed, in groups of four with a row of brick headers below the cast concrete sills. Each of the four classrooms also has an exterior door, a two-light, aluminum-framed glass door located near the center of the north or south elevation. Between the classroom entrances on the north and south elevations are small areas, enclosed with low brick walls that house mechanical equipment.

The main entrances to the building are located on the east end of north and south elevations, adjacent to the shed-roofed wing, and open to a transverse hallway on the east end of the building that separates the classrooms from the shed-roofed restroom wing. The entrances are inset and above the open entries are soldier-course lintels that form the bottom border of a decorative checkerboard brick panel that matches those over the entrances of the main school building. Doors are paired, aluminum-framed glass doors. An inset entrance on the west elevation also has this decorative checkerboard panel and paired, aluminum-framed glass doors. A metal structure south of the building once shaded the play area and a flat metal roof on metal poles connects the north entrance of the building to the cafeteria.

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The interior of the building includes four classrooms, an entrance lobby, and two restrooms. A double-loaded corridor extends east-west with two classrooms on the north side and two classrooms on the south side. Small office spaces with glass at the upper portion of the walls, are located between each pair of classrooms. A transverse entrance hall on the east end of the building connects to the two main entrances and the shed-roofed restroom wing. The entrance hall has exposed brick walls and the main hallway has a dropped acoustic-tile ceiling. The classroom spaces have composite tile floors, drywall walls and ceilings, and solid wood doors with two-light sidelights. The restrooms have composite tile flooring and brick and tile walls and each retains a single two-light slider window on the east elevation.

### 6. Caretaker's House

1939

#### Non-Contributing Building

Constructed in 1939, concurrent with the current school building, the caretaker's house was built so that someone would be onsite in the case of another school fire like the one that destroyed the 1935 school. The one-story, side-gabled, frame caretaker's house is three bays wide and two bays deep with a full-width, gabled rear wing. The house has a brick foundation, vinyl siding and windows (paired on the façade), triangular louvered vents in the gables, and an asphalt-shingled roof. The entrance, a six-panel wood door, is centered on the façade and flanked by four-light-over-one-panel sidelights. It is sheltered by a near-full-width, hip-roofed porch supported by square posts and is accessed by wood steps with a simple wood railing. The rear wing is three bays deep and has a projecting gabled bay at the right rear (southwest).

The interior of the caretaker's house was not accessible, but according to a plan of the school complex from 1981, it features a hall-and-parlor plan at the front (north) end with two additional rooms along the west elevation and a hallway down the center of the building that accessed a single room on the east side of the rear ell. Sources for the school indicate that after having been converted to a reading center, then back to a residence, it retains little historic fabric with carpet and synthetic flooring over the original hardwoods and an updated kitchen and bathroom. Wood baseboards and flat-board door and window trim with a molded backband remain in some areas of the house, along with bulletin boards installed when the building was converted to a reading center. A built-in ironing board remains in the kitchen and a fireplace in the living room retains an unpainted wood mantel with chamfered wood plinths supporting a paneled lintel with center medallion and sawn, undulating mantles shelf.

### 7. Shed

c. 1939

#### Contributing Building

One-story, shed-roofed, frame shed is located in the tree line just west of the agriculture building. The shed has German-profile weatherboards, an asphalt roof, and a batten door. It was possibly constructed in 1939, concurrent with the main school building and caretaker's house.

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### 8. Shed

c. 1957

#### Contributing Building

Located just west of the agriculture building, near the tree line and the c. 1939 frame shed, stands a one-story, side-gabled, frame shed. The shed has a concrete-block foundation, asphalt roof, and flush plywood sheathing. It was possibly constructed concurrent with the c. 1957 agriculture building.

#### Condition/Integrity Statement

The Little River High School retains significant integrity of location and setting including the full historic acreage, as well as driveways, walkways, and planned open spaces associated with the school. Material changes to the school complex include the replacement of most exterior doors and windows in the main building, auditorium, middle school and high school wings, though the original fenestration pattern remains. Additionally, the main building and auditorium have experienced water damage throughout due to failing roofs that have allowed water to infiltrate the walls and ceilings, threatening historic finishes. Water in the auditorium is causing the plaster ceilings, and later dropped ceilings, to crumble, while water in the main building is contributing to the growth of mold on the walls and later carpets. Further, the floor plan of the north end of the main building was significantly altered to accommodate a doctor's office and retains neither the historic layout, nor any historic finishes. The 1957 cafeteria has been significantly altered with the installation of vinyl windows and fiber cement siding in the large windows openings formerly filled with metal-framed windows, altering the modern appearance of building and rendering it non-contributing. However, despite these alterations, the buildings retain sufficient integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to be interpreted as a mid-twentieth century school complex.

#### General Statement of Archaeological Potential

The school complex is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains, such as trash deposits, wells, and structural remains which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the Little River School. Information concerning institutional culture and African American identity, as well as structural details, can be obtained from the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the school. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is likely that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

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### Statement of Significance:

The 1939 Little River High School is significant under National Register Criterion A for education and ethnic heritage as the first public high school in rural Durham County constructed specifically to serve the African American population grades one through eleven. The school represents an era of African American education from the consolidation of the rural schools in the 1930s through the integration period of the 1960s.

The school is also significant under National Register Criterion C for architecture as a highly intact rural brick school complex for African Americans. Little River High School was the first large school campus to be constructed for African American students outside of the Durham city limits, replacing one- and two-room frame schools throughout northern Durham County. The brick school, which was enlarged several times from 1939 to 1957, illustrates an ongoing commitment by the Durham County Board of Education to provide better educational facilities for the rural black population from the 1930s through the period of integration.

Further, the progression in style from the 1939 main school building to the 1950s wings and additions is illustrative of statewide trends in school design from the 1930s through mid-century. The 1939 main building features symmetrical massing, cast stone door surrounds, and period brick detailing including checkerboard panels over the fenestration on the entrance bay and was enlarged about 1949 with a similarly styled one-story-with-basement elementary wing. Large banks of exterior windows along with interior transoms, multi-light doors and borrowed light windows provided classrooms and hallways with adequate light and ventilation. Later, the 1953 high school wing and the 1954-55 gymnasium were built in the Modern style with a low, flat profile and grouped metal-frame windows. The 1957 cafeteria and agriculture buildings were also constructed in the Modern style, each with a flat roof and metal windows, and are connected to the main building and its additions by metal-covered walkways. The Modern style was commonly used in mid-century education buildings since steel-framing or load-bearing concrete-block construction led to lower construction costs and allowed for large windows to illuminate interior spaces.

The period of significance extends from the school's construction in 1939 to 1969, when the last class of high school students graduated from the school. For its continued contribution to the education of African Americans throughout the period of integration, the Little River High School satisfies Criterion Consideration G for properties less than fifty years of age that have achieved significance within the past fifty years. While the school remained in use as Little River Elementary School, an integrated school, until 1993, its post-1969 use is not of exceptional significance.

### Educational and Ethnic Heritage Context:

The roots of public education in North Carolina stem from the post-Civil-War era. North Carolina's Constitution of 1868 called for a "general and uniform" public school system, and an 1875 amendment mandated their

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segregation.<sup>4</sup> Although Durham voters approved a bond to fund a public school for white children in 1881, funding was not provided for African American schools. In 1883, the Dortch Act was passed, dividing tax revenue for schools according to race.<sup>5</sup> However, the Act received significant opposition from the North Carolina Teachers Association, a group of African American educators who advocated for equality in schools.<sup>6</sup> The North Carolina Supreme Court ruled the Act unconstitutional, however separate tax districts continued to be designated by the Durham County School Board in spite of this ruling.<sup>7</sup> African American schools received no state funding until 1897.<sup>8</sup>

The first schools for African American children were located within the city, and children who lived outside the city were expected to travel great distances if they wished to attend. In 1887, Hillside Park High School (Whitted School) (NR, 2013) opened on Ramsay Street as the first school for African American children in Durham County. Two additional schools were constructed in the first decade of the twentieth century, the West End School on Ferrell Street in 1901 and East End School on Dowd Street in 1909. These three schools served the African American children through eighth grade, and no high school education was offered. When the schools became overcrowded, the school superintendent recommended, instead of new school construction, expansion of the Whitted School and East End School. Although most rural students were unable to travel into the city for school, the superintendent stated that the three existing schools were located close enough to both the rural and urban African American populations to adequately educate their children.<sup>9</sup> By 1902, Durham County had thirty-four white schools but only seventeen black schools, and most were the one- or two-room structures typical of the time.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin R. Justesen and Scott Matthews, "Public Education - Part 3: The First Graded Schools, the State Constitution of 1868, and Legal Segregation," NCpedia, 2006, [www.ncpedia.org](http://www.ncpedia.org) (accessed July 19, 2016); Jeffrey J. Crow, et al, *A History of African Americans in North Carolina*, revised second edition (Raleigh, NC: Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 2011), 156; John E. Batchelor, *Race and Integration in North Carolina: From Segregation to Desegregation* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2015), 8.

<sup>5</sup> Justesen and Matthews, "Public Education."

<sup>6</sup> Adrienne Dunn, "North Carolina Teachers Association," North Carolina History Project, <http://northcarolinahistory.org/encyclopedia/north-carolina-teachers-association> (accessed July 19, 2016)

<sup>7</sup> Justesen and Matthews, "Public Education"; "Durham County Board of Education Minutes, 1915-1933," microfilm, Durham County Library, Durham, North Carolina

<sup>8</sup> Crow, *A History of African Americans*, 156.

<sup>9</sup> Whitted School met in a church and a tobacco prize house before a school building was constructed in 1893. The school was located on Ramsay Street and was destroyed by fire in 1921, reopening as Hillside Park High School. West End School was located at 921 Ferrell Street and was demolished in the 1930s. East End School was located at 515 Dowd Street in Durham. The school closed in the late 1990s and now houses a church. Jennifer Martin Mitchell, "Hillside Park High School", Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, 2013, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, NC, 5-6. Gary Kueber, "West End Graded School," Open Durham, <http://www.opendurham.org/buildings/west-end-graded-school> (accessed November 18, 2016); Gary Kueber, "East End Graded School," Open Durham, <http://www.opendurham.org/buildings/east-end-graded-school> (accessed November 18, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Jean Bradley Anderson, *Durham County*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 240.

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Although the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision reinforced the concept of “separate but equal,” equality was never actually achieved by this decision and clear disparities between white and black schools remained.<sup>11</sup> City teachers were some of the highest paid in the state and the white schools specifically were of high quality by the 1910s. However, rural teachers were mostly young, inexperienced, underqualified, and undercompensated.<sup>12</sup> Rather than building new schools for African American children, sometimes the school board built new white schools and then re-commissioned former white schools for use as black schools. Oftentimes, the citizens of a black school district were expected to make any necessary repairs to their schools themselves.<sup>13</sup> This was likely exacerbated by the Great Depression, as it was generally difficult to collect taxes for funding schools, paying teachers, or operating recreation programs at that time.<sup>14</sup>

John Hope Franklin and other experts in African American history in the South believed that African Americans in Durham generally had better opportunities for education and employment than the rest of the South. Durham’s African Americans were able to obtain jobs in the tobacco industry, and the nationally known “Black Wall Street” was a four-block area in the city where African American-owned businesses thrived.<sup>15</sup> Further, the Rosenwald Fund alleviated some educational disparities between the races by providing funds to build schools for African American children. Eighteen communities in Durham County constructed new elementary schools using Rosenwald funds between 1921 and 1930, including the Russell School, Woods School, Sylvan School, Mill Grove School, Bahama School, and Rougemont School, all in northern Durham County, though only the 1927 Russell School (2001 Saint Mary’s Road, Hillsborough) remains.<sup>16</sup>

By the 1920s it was clear that high schools were needed – and wanted – for African American children, and in 1922, Hillside Park High School opened just south of downtown Durham (200 East Umstead Street).<sup>17</sup> Yet within two years, Nathan Carter Newbold, Director of the NC Division of Negro Education, “appeared before the [Durham County Board of Education] to discuss the high school situation for negro children. The Board of Education explained to Mr. Newbold that it would not be feasible to build a high school for colored children at

<sup>11</sup> Lynn Roundtree, “Plessy v. Ferguson,” NCpedia, 2006, <http://ncpedia.org/plessy-v-ferguson> (accessed August 2016); Batchelor, *Race and Integration in North Carolina*, 5-6.

<sup>12</sup> Anderson, *Durham County*, 240-241.

<sup>13</sup> For the 1916-1917 school year, no new schools were constructed for African American students. However, the Reservoir School for white children was decommissioned, moved, repaired, and reopened for African American children that year. Joanne Abel, “Persistence and Sacrifice: Durham County’s African American Community & Durham’s Jeanes Teachers Build Community and Schools, 1900-1930,” M.A. Thesis, Duke University, 2009, 41-42.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Westin, “A History of the Durham School System, 1882-1933,” M.A. Thesis, Duke University, 1960, 124-125.

<sup>15</sup> Batchelor, *Race and Integration in North Carolina*, 22; Sarah Caroline Thuesen, *Greater than Equal: African American Struggles for Schools and Citizenship in North Carolina, 1919-1965* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 96-97.

<sup>16</sup> North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office GIS Web Service, [gis.ncdcr.gov/hpweb/](http://gis.ncdcr.gov/hpweb/) (accessed November 1, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> Mitchell, “Hillside Park High School”; Crow, *African Americans*, 157-158; Durham County Board of Education Minutes, 1915-1933.

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this time."<sup>18</sup> Instead, in 1930, high school classes were added to the Mill Grove Elementary School, a Rosenwald Fund school north of the city. County students were able to attend, though they were required to find their own transportation to the school.<sup>19</sup> Throughout the 1920s, all high schools went through eleventh grade. By the mid-1930s, twelfth grade was offered in white schools, while requests for the additional grade were denied for black schools.<sup>20</sup>

A 1935 report from the North Carolina Superintendent of Public Instruction found that only about forty percent of African American children in North Carolina had access to a high school. Additionally, none offered a full four years of high school education, and most children could not attend because transportation or boarding to attend the school were cost prohibitive. The report further found that with only one high school for city residents (Hillside Park High School, also known as the Whitted School) and one for rural residents (Mill Grove High School), Durham's African American high school student population was inadequately served. The report concluded with the recommendation that high schools be added and/or transportation provided to underserved areas.<sup>21</sup>

Even before the publication of the report, a group of nearly 150 African Americans from rural Durham County, known as the Durham County Commissioners and Rural Improvement Association, attended the Durham County Board of Education meeting on June 4, 1934. They insisted that a high school be constructed in a more centrally located area in northern Durham County than the Mill Grove School, which was relatively close to the Durham city limits.<sup>22</sup> At that time, the U.S. Bureau of Education was advocating strongly for African American schools to focus their curriculums on home economics for girls and agriculture for boys. They believed this would encourage education in fields where employment was most likely – domestic service for women and farming for men.<sup>23</sup> With this in mind, the group successfully argued that a high school education that included agriculture and home economics would produce self-reliant students who would contribute to the Durham community as adults. The County School Board agreed to budget \$15,000 for the school, and an additional \$20,000 was obtained from the state's Literary Loan Fund.<sup>24</sup>

Shortly thereafter, a committee including Clifford B. Nixon, John Jones, Thomas Harris, and Johnnie Harris was established to select a location for the new school. At their recommendation, the school board purchased

<sup>18</sup> Durham County Board of Education Minutes, April 7, 1924; Valinda W. Rogers Littlefield, "An overview of the history of Little River High School," May 23, 1993, Little River Community Complex History Room, Bahama, NC.

<sup>19</sup> Abel, "Persistence and Sacrifice," 107; Littlefield, "Overview."

<sup>20</sup> Theusen, *Greater than Equal*, 63.

<sup>21</sup> N.C. Newbold, et al., "Report of the Governor's Commission for the Study of Problems in the Education of Negroes in North Carolina" (Raleigh, NC: State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1935), 30, 33, 37-38, 42.

<sup>22</sup> Durham County Board of Education Minutes, June 4, 1934; Littlefield, "Overview".

<sup>23</sup> Theusen, *Greater than Equal*, 78.

<sup>24</sup> Littlefield, "Overview"; (check whole paragraph for Littlefield) Durham County Board of Education Minutes, June 4, 1934, March 4, 1935, April 1, 1935, and May 16, 1935.

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fourteen acres on the west side of Roxboro Road just north of the Little River, paying \$50 per acre, from owner John Terry.<sup>25</sup> The ground breaking for the new school was on July 4, 1935.<sup>26</sup>

George Hackney was hired to design the new school, and Connie Ship served as the general contractor.<sup>27</sup> Hackney studied Architectural Engineering at North Carolina State College, now North Carolina State University. Upon graduation in 1927, he joined the engineering team working on Duke University's West Campus near downtown Durham. At the completion of that project in 1930, Hackney started his own firm.<sup>28</sup> His first plan for Little River High School was for a two-story school, but W.F. Cradle, the State Director of Schoolhouse Planning, preferred one-story plans for rural schools for fire safety reasons. Hackney redesigned the school to a one-story plan, which was completed in 1935 at a cost of \$36,000.<sup>29</sup> It included ten classrooms, an auditorium that seated 375 students, and a principal's office. The school also included a library, which had 585 books, including primarily encyclopedias, literature, and history books.<sup>30</sup> The school served both elementary and high school grades, grades one through eleven, as was typical of black high schools at the time, and consolidated several smaller grammar schools. The elementary and high school grades had five classrooms each to share among their students.<sup>31</sup> A water tower was likely also constructed around the time the school was finished, since school board minutes indicate that there were continued problems with acquiring an adequate water supply from wells on the site, though the current tower appears to be of later construction.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Littlefield, "Overview"; Unknown Author, "The History of High School Education for Negroes in Durham County Since 1927," Durham County Library, North Carolina Collection.

<sup>26</sup> "Little River School History," Durham County Library, North Carolina Collection.

<sup>27</sup> Durham County Board of Education Minutes, November 19, 1934, and June 24, 1935; Littlefield, "Overview"; Unknown Author, "The History of High School Education for Negroes in Durham County," Durham County Library, North Carolina Collection.

<sup>28</sup> NC Modernist Houses, "George Franklin Hackney (1905-1997)," [www.ncmodernist.org/hackney](http://www.ncmodernist.org/hackney) (accessed July 19, 2016).

<sup>29</sup> At the August 30, 1935, meeting of the school board, an additional \$2500 was approved for construction of the school, although it appears only \$1000 was actually needed to complete the project. Durham County Board of Education Minutes, March 4, 1935, April 1, 1935, August 30, 1935, November 4, 1935, and December 2, 1935.; "Fire Destroys Little River High School," *Carolina Times*, April 15, 1939, Durham County Library, North Carolina Collection.

<sup>30</sup> Unknown Author, "The History of High School Education for Negroes in Durham County"; Unknown Author, "Little River School History"; CB Nixon, "High School Principal's Annual Report, 1935-1936," Durham County Library, North Carolina Collection, Durham, NC; Durham County Board of Education Minutes, November 19, 1934.

<sup>31</sup> Elementary and high school included grades one to eleven. "Site is Purchased for Negro School," *Durham Morning Herald*, September 24, 1934, Durham County Library, North Carolina Collection; CB Nixon, "High School Principal's Annual Report, 1935-1936," Durham County Library; Crow, *African Americans*, 158-159.

<sup>32</sup> Durham County Board of Education Minutes, October 7, 1935, November 4, 1935, and December 2, 1935; Personal interview with Mozelle Long by Heather Wagner Slane and Cheri Szcodronski, July 28, 2016.



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The school board did not inspect and approve the school for occupation until November 1935, so it opened in the middle of the 1935-1936 school year with 157 students in grades eight through eleven.<sup>33</sup> Clifford B. Nixon, a Wilmington, North Carolina, native, served as the first principal from 1935-1965. He studied science and mathematics at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, then received a Master's in administration from Columbia University in New York. He had been a leader in the efforts to establish a high school for the rural citizens and was a middle school teacher and principal in Durham before helping to found Little River High School.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to Nixon, who taught chemistry, economics, and sociology, five more teachers taught the high school grades: Pearl Ligan taught English and history, Martha Dooms taught French, biology, and algebra, Jochebed Christmas taught English and algebra, Marie Moffit taught home economics, and James Moffit taught agriculture. Rosa Branch, Laura Parker, Lucile King, Sallie Harris, Lillian Hamme, and Flora Carlton taught elementary school. School began at 8:30 for all grades, and students attended eight class periods, as well as lunch, before dismissal at 2:30. In addition to their academic classes, students could participate in extracurricular activities including debate club, Crown & Scepter Club for honors students, Negro history club, 4-H, or music clubs.<sup>35</sup>

To accommodate home economics and agriculture classes, which were taught both for the high school students as well as adults in the community, the county school board approved the construction of a two-room frame building in 1937.<sup>36</sup> It was a wooden structure behind the main school building, completed during the 1937-1938 school year. George Hackney was again asked to serve as the architect, and T.W. Poe was selected as the general contractor.<sup>37</sup> During the project, Hackney and Poe discovered the slab over the boiler room in the existing school was giving way, causing the floor of the classroom above it to begin to collapse. Steel girders were added to reinforce the floor and repair the damage.<sup>38</sup>

On April 10, 1939, the main school building and auditorium were completely destroyed by a fire. Since it had been closed for several days for the Easter holiday, it was speculated that the fire was not accidental, although the responsible party was never discovered.<sup>39</sup> Reconstructing the school cost \$34,000, but since insurance covered most of the damages, the School Board agreed to budget the remaining \$1700 needed to rebuild the

<sup>33</sup> The number of elementary school students is unknown as this information was not included in any principal's reports. Durham County Board of Education Minutes, November 4, 1935, and December 2, 1935; CB Nixon, "High School Principal's Annual Report, 1935-1936," Durham County Library.

<sup>34</sup> Littlefield, "Overview"; Unknown Author, "Clifford Bernard Nixon, January 7, 1900 – July 26, 1993," Durham County Library.

<sup>35</sup> Littlefield, "Overview"; CB Nixon, "High School Principal's Annual Report, 1935-1936," Durham County Library; CB Nixon, "High School Principal's Annual Report, 1939-1940," NC State Archives, Raleigh, NC.

<sup>36</sup> CB Nixon, "High School Principal's Annual Report, 1939-1940," NC State Archives; Durham County Board of Education Minutes, September 7, 1937.

<sup>37</sup> Durham County Board of Education Minutes, October 25, 1937.

<sup>38</sup> Durham County Board of Education Minutes, November 17, 1937, and December 6, 1937.

<sup>39</sup> "Fire Destroys Little River High School," *Carolina Times*, April 15, 1939, North Carolina Collection, Durham County Library, Durham, NC.

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school.<sup>40</sup> For the remainder of the 1938-39 school year, classes were taught in the Home Economics and Agriculture Building, which had survived the fire. Additional classes were taught at nearby locations including Russell School, Mt. Cavalry Baptist Church, Mill Grove School, and Orange Grove Baptist Church.<sup>41</sup>

George Hackney again designed the school, and C.A. Herrin served as the general contractor. The new building was completed in September 1939 and was very similar in size to the destroyed building, having been built on the remaining foundation.<sup>42</sup> The Principal's Report for that year indicates the school had increased to sixteen classrooms, however the building's footprint, as seen on USDA aerial photos from 1940, had not increased. It is possible that some classrooms were temporarily subdivided to accommodate overcrowded conditions, while others were held in the Home Economics and Agriculture Building. A caretaker's cottage was built in 1939 on the south end of the complex for Isaac Jones, the school's janitor, to help alleviate continued concerns about the school's safety.<sup>43</sup> The school district also acquired the parcel of farmland north of the school, after receiving complaints from the former owners that students were trespassing in their crops.<sup>44</sup> For the 1939-40 school year, Principal Nixon reported 200 students in grades eight through eleven, with eight classrooms and eight teachers for high school students, and eight classrooms and seven teachers for the elementary students.<sup>45</sup> By the start of the 1940 school year, Ethel Hall, Ethel Burghardt, and I.R. Holmes had joined the high school faculty.

School attendance declined significantly in the early 1940s. World War II forced many high school students in particular to leave school and help at home or on family farms, taking the place of older relatives who enlisted in the military.<sup>46</sup> High school enrollment dropped from 197 students in 1940-41 to 67 students in 1942-43, despite the addition of a twelfth grade, with no students at all enrolled in the eleventh grade. In 1945, the county school board closed Russell School, relocating its elementary students to Little River High School and Mill Grove High School.<sup>47</sup> Yet, in spite of the consolidation, student numbers remained low throughout the mid-1940s, with Little River High School reporting approximately 60-70 high school students and five high school teachers during those years. However, enrollment numbers began to rise again by the end of the decade with 88 high school students in 1947-48 and 105 students by 1951-52.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Littlefield, "Overview."

<sup>41</sup> Study List Application Timeline

<sup>42</sup> Durham County Board of Education Minutes, May 1, 1939, May 26, 1939, and September 4, 1939.

<sup>43</sup> Unknown Author, "Little River School History." Durham County Board of Education Minutes, September 27, 1939.

<sup>44</sup> Durham County Board of Education Minutes, August 7, 1939.

<sup>45</sup> CB Nixon, "High School Principal's Report, 1930-1940," NC State Archives; USDA Historical Aerial Photos, Durham County, 1940, Map 6B-20, University of North Carolina Geographic Information Systems Services, [www2.lib.unc.edu/reference/gis/USDA/index.html](http://www2.lib.unc.edu/reference/gis/USDA/index.html) (accessed July 2016).

<sup>46</sup> Personal interview with Mozelle Long, July 28, 2016.

<sup>47</sup> M. Ruth Little, "Russell School", Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, 2009, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, NC, 5.

<sup>48</sup> Since state law regulated the number of teachers allowed based on the number of students, their numbers declined as well. CB Nixon, "High School Principal's Annual Report, 1940-41, 1942-43, 1947-48, 1951-52," North Carolina State Archives.

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In spite of the challenges of enrollment at the high school level, the school continued to flourish in other respects during the 1940s. In 1943, the county schools lengthened their terms from eight months to nine. Although a twelfth grade had been added to most white schools in the 1930s, Little River was finally granted the twelfth grade for the 1942-1943 school year.<sup>49</sup> Civics, Geography, Business, Health, Home Nursing, and Sociology were all added to the curriculum during the 1940s.<sup>50</sup> Following the war, W.C. Holt taught returning veterans' classes, and during the 1946-1947 school year, the principal reported 72 adult students.<sup>51</sup>

While principals' reports are not available for the elementary students at Little River, student population appears to have grown in the late 1940s, due in part to the closure of Russell School in 1945. Classrooms during that time were subdivided again to accommodate the expanding curriculum and increasing number of students, demonstrating a growing need for the construction of new classrooms.<sup>52</sup> The growth was significant enough to warrant the addition of an elementary classroom wing. The one-story-with-basement, six-classroom addition was built on the south end of the main school building to house the elementary grades. It was likely completed in 1949, as the high school principal's reports indicate an increase from seventeen to twenty classrooms between the 1948-49 and 1949-50 school years and the addition appears on aerial photos from 1955.<sup>53</sup>

In 1953, the school was enlarged again with six additional classrooms constructed for high school students behind the main classroom building.<sup>54</sup> A gymnasium, complete with wooden bleachers and an electronic scoreboard, was also completed in 1955 the north end of the campus. Enrollment continued to increase, and the school reported 158 students enrolled in 1955. In 1957, a new state-funded brick cafeteria was added behind the main classroom building, and a brick building was constructed for the Home Economics and Agriculture classes next to the original wooden Home Economics and Agriculture Building.<sup>55</sup> In 1962, a science department, including biology, chemistry, and physics courses, was added to the curriculum. In addition to new courses, students could participate in 4-H, glee club, and student council.<sup>56</sup> Basketball was an especially popular

<sup>49</sup> CB Nixon, "High School Principal's Annual Report, 1942-1943 and 1943-1944," North Carolina State Archives.

<sup>50</sup> CB Nixon, "High School Principal's Annual Reports, 1940-1941, and 1946-1947," Durham County Library; CB Nixon, "High School Principal's Annual Reports, 1942-1943, 1943-1944, 1944-1945, 1947-1948, 1948-1949, and 1949-1950," North Carolina State Archives.

<sup>51</sup> Pauline Harris, "The History of Little River High School," Durham County Library, North Carolina Collection, Durham, NC; W. Malloy, "High School Principal's Report, 1946-1947," Durham County Library, North Carolina Collection, Durham, NC.

<sup>52</sup> CB Nixon, "High School Principal's Annual Reports, 1940-1941, 1946-1947, and 1951-1952," Durham County Library; CB Nixon, "High School Principal's Annual Reports, 1942-1943, 1943-1944, 1944-1945, 1947-1948, 1948-1949, and 1949-1950," NC State Archives.

<sup>53</sup> USDA Historical Aerial Photos, Durham County, 1940 Map 6B-20, and 1955 Map 9P-135, University of North Carolina Geographic Information Systems Services, [www2.lib.unc.edu/reference/gis/USDA/index.html](http://www2.lib.unc.edu/reference/gis/USDA/index.html) (accessed July 2016);

<sup>54</sup> Study List application timeline.

<sup>55</sup> Unknown Author, "The History of High School Education for Negroes in Durham County"

<sup>56</sup> Unknown Author, "Little River School History"; CB Nixon, "High School Annual Report, 1955-1956," Durham Library, North Carolina Collection, Durham, NC.

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extracurricular activity, and the Little River High School Beavers won the state Boys Basketball Championship in 1965.<sup>57</sup>

The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to end legal segregation in public schools did not immediately impact Durham's county schools. Most of the white population of North Carolina strongly opposed the idea of integration, and the Supreme Court did not include a mandate for implementation of school integration in its decision. Therefore, for many years, North Carolina's governors carefully navigated between the opposing sides. In August of 1954, Governor Thomas Umstead established the Governor's Special Advisory Committee on Education, known as the Pearsall Committee after Thomas Pearsall, its chairman and a former member of the North Carolina House of Representatives.<sup>58</sup> In 1954, the committee reported that "the mixing of the races in the public schools cannot be accomplished and should not be attempted."<sup>59</sup> In response, the Pupil Assignment Act allowed local school boards the authority to assign pupils to specific schools, which effectively ensured a lengthy integration process without outright defiance of the *Brown* decision.<sup>60</sup>

The following year, the United States Supreme Court passed its implementation decree, and North Carolina complied by continuing its voluntary integration processes.<sup>61</sup> Hundreds of applications were made to the Durham City Board of Education for cross-racial transfers, so the board formed a Segregation Committee "to study the segregation question."<sup>62</sup> As a result of similar activity statewide, the Pearsall Committee recommended repeal of state mandated public schools and compulsory attendance requirements, and the establishment of state grants for private school tuition assistance and a legal assistance fund to support school boards engaged in integration lawsuits, known as the Pearsall Plan – all in an effort to maintain voluntary integration by providing white citizens an opportunity to avoid attending school with African American students.<sup>63</sup>

Governor Luther Hodges (1954-1961), like his predecessor, walked the middle ground, saying that if voluntary integration didn't work, the state would have to decide between forced integration and the elimination of public schools altogether.<sup>64</sup> He made no secret of his preference for continued segregation, and in 1957 when Charlotte, Greensboro, and Winston-Salem became the first cities to integrate schools, he simply warned that violence would not be tolerated "in connection with this problem."<sup>65</sup> Throughout the latter half of the 1950s, NAACP activity, Ku Klux Klan violence, and litigation continued to increase across the state. Although no schools were closed to avoid integration under the authority of the Pearsall Plan, state authorities considered the NAACP and

<sup>57</sup> Little River High School, "Program for ceremony honoring historically black Little River School 1965 state basketball champions, the Busy Beavers," Durham County Library, North Carolina Collection, Durham, NC.

<sup>58</sup> Batchelor, *Race and Education*, 30-39; Mitchell, "Hillside Park High School, 13; Crow, *African Americans*, 169-170.

<sup>59</sup> Batchelor, *Race and Education*, 39.

<sup>60</sup> Batchelor, *Race and Education*, 41-42; Mitchell, "Hillside Park High School, 14; Crow, *African Americans*, 170.

<sup>61</sup> Batchelor, *Race and Education*, 43-44; Crow, *African Americans*, 172.

<sup>62</sup> Mitchell, "Hillside Park High School," 13-14;

<sup>63</sup> Batchelor, *Race and Education*, 44-45, 51-54; Crow, *African Americans*, 172-173.

<sup>64</sup> Batchelor, *Race and Education*, 51-53.

<sup>65</sup> Batchelor, *Race and Education*, 60; Crow, *African Americans*, 174-175.

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the Klan as extremists.<sup>66</sup> cursory integration during this period did not result in widespread opposition by the general public; however, as segregation continued, public opposition grew. It wasn't until the 1960s that civil rights demonstrations began in earnest, finally forcing real change in North Carolina's public schools.<sup>67</sup>

Unlike the Durham city schools, county schools did not feel the same pressure to integrate, and did not receive any requests for cross-racial transfers until 1963. Following the 1965 *Clarence Thompson et. al. v. Durham County Board of Education et. al.* case, Durham County schools were required to begin integration. The board established a plan that integrated the seventh, eighth, and tenth grades for the 1965-66 school year, the third, fifth, ninth, and twelfth grades for the 1966-67 school year, and finally the second, fourth, sixth, and eleventh grades for the 1967-68 school year.<sup>68</sup> Integration was further ensured by the 1968 case of *Boomer v. Beaufort County Board of Education*, which found that freedom of choice was unconstitutional and would no longer constitute compliance with Supreme Court mandates to desegregate schools. Full integration was ordered to be in place by the 1968-69 school year.<sup>69</sup>

Integration resulted in significant changes to many of Durham's city and county schools, with most African American schools repurposed or abandoned while white schools were enlarged to meet the integrated student population.<sup>70</sup> Little River High School could not accommodate both black and white students in grades one through twelve that it had previously served. So in 1967, the school was converted to Little River Elementary School and accepted new students to grades five and six. The seventh and eighth grades were transferred to Carrington Middle School (located at 227 Milton Road) and Chewning Middle School (now School for Creative Studies located at 5001 Red Mill Road), bussed from the Little River High School in the morning and back again in the afternoon.<sup>71</sup> Some students were able to continue their high school courses during the integration process, with grades nine through twelve served until 1968, when the ninth grade was transferred to other schools. Grades ten through twelve were taught for another year with the last high school class graduated in 1969. Starting with the 1969-1970 term, high school classes were no longer taught at Little River.<sup>72</sup>

Additional physical changes occurred as the buildings were adapted for elementary school use, serving students in grades three through six. The agriculture building was converted to a computer lab and media center. The frame Home Economics building was demolished for the construction of the 1983 four-classroom building. The original classroom building and elementary wing remained unchanged, and the auditorium continued to be used for art, music, and theater.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Batchelor, *Race and Education*, 63-72; Thuesen, *Greater than Equal*, 224; Crow, *African Americans*, 175.

<sup>67</sup> Mitchell, "Hillside Park High School," 14-16.

<sup>68</sup> Anderson, *Durham County*, 364-366.

<sup>69</sup> Crow, *African Americans*, 174-175.

<sup>70</sup> Mitchell, "Hillside Park High School," 17-18.

<sup>71</sup> Unknown Author, "Little River School History."

<sup>72</sup> Study List Application Narrative; JD Lennon, "High School Annual Report, 1966-1967 and 1967-1968," NC State Archives; TD Clark, "High School Annual Report, 1968-1969," NC State Archives.

<sup>73</sup> Personal Interview with Preston Andrews by Heather Wagner Slane and Cheri Szcodronski, July 28, 2016.

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In 1993, the school closed after the construction of a new Little River Elementary School in nearby Bahama. In some cases, closing a school resulted in a disconnect between the African American community's past and its built environment.<sup>74</sup> Little River School, however, enjoyed continued use as a community center. In 1994, Durham County transferred ownership of the property to Little River Community Complex, a nonprofit organization established to provide "a place where individuals and families in the surrounding communities can receive an array of social, health, educational program services and opportunities." The school campus now houses before- and after-school programs in the agriculture building, a senior citizen center with exercise and hobby programs in the high school classrooms and gymnasium, and event rental spaces in the cafeteria. The organization also preserves the history of rural Durham County's African American community by managing a history room as a community archives and research library.<sup>75</sup>

### Architectural Context:

School design and construction in rural Durham County was representative of statewide trends in the early twentieth century. Where dedicated school buildings existed, most were one- or two-room frame structures, very plainly finished with wood siding, double-hung windows, and bare interiors. Few of these rural frame schools survive as most were either demolished or converted for other uses. The 1913 Union (Grove) School (9901 North Roxboro Road), just north of the Little River School, is representative of that trend. The front-gabled, frame school served white children until 1923 when it was decommissioned by the school board and converted for use as a Methodist Church with additions on the façade and rear gable end.

While rural schools generally lagged behind their urban counterparts in design, materials, and amenities, African American schools were especially deficient. In *Durham County*, Jean Bradley Anderson notes that the state inspector of colored schools in 1916 found twenty one-teacher schools and one two-teacher school in Durham County. However, the inspector noted that no school houses had been built within ten years, only two of the twenty-one had ever been painted, only one-third had desks, and the rest had only shaky benches cast off from white schools.<sup>76</sup> With the exception of the 1927 Russell School (NR2009) (2001 Saint Mary's Road, Hillsborough), a Rosenwald Fund school, no early twentieth-century African American schools remain in northern Durham County.

Brick construction was used for schools within Durham city limits starting about 1910, but it was the mid-1920s before brick schools began to be constructed for white students in rural areas. The first all-brick school to be constructed in rural Durham County was the 1925-1928 Lowes Grove School (4505 South Alston Avenue, Durham). The 1928 two-story, red-brick elementary school building stood at the north end of a six-building campus partially funded by the 1913 Farm Life Bill and is the only extant building from that complex. More stylized than other rural schools in the county, the Colonial Revival-style building retains distinctive elements including Neoclassical Revival-style entrance porticos with Doric pilasters and full entablatures. However, the

<sup>74</sup> Mitchell, "Hillside Park High School," 17-18.

<sup>75</sup> Study List Application Timeline & Narrative; Little River Community Complex, "About Us," <http://littlerivercomplex.webs.com/aboutus.htm> (accessed August 2016).

<sup>76</sup> Anderson, Jean Bradley, *Durham County*, 240.

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building is abandoned and significantly deteriorated. More typical of rural school construction, especially in the 1930s, is the 1935 Rougemont School (208 Red Mountain Road, Rougemont) a one-story, side-gabled Georgian Revival-style brick building with flanking front-gabled classroom wings. The building features a red brick exterior with brick panels on the front-gabled wings, paired double-hung windows, gabled dormer vents, and a cupola on the main ridge. The 1930s Mangum High School (9008 Quail Roost Road, Bahama) was of a similar design with a U-shaped, one-story plan with grouped windows, a cupola on the main side-gabled ridgeline and arched transoms over the paired entry doors. Part of a complex that included two brick buildings as well as frame home economics building and frame teacherage, the main building burned in 1960, and other resources were demolished by 2009.<sup>77</sup>

The 1939 Little River High School was the large, masonry school in the county to be constructed for rural African American students. Designed by local architect George Hackney, the one-story, red-brick building has a three-bay, projecting entrance with cast-concrete surround at the inset entrance with simple detailing, including a beltcourse above the windows and checkerboard panels and zig-zag detailing on the parapet, all constructed in red brick. Grouped windows on the east and west elevations continued the best practices of school design championed by the Rosenwald Fund and other school planners of the 1920s, enhancing the lighting and ventilation of the building. Nine-light-over-one-panel doors with operable transoms and additional borrowed light windows between the hallway and classrooms illuminated the hallways and promoted air circulation. An auditorium, especially important in rural areas as it served a dual purpose as a community meeting space, was also included in the original 1939 building.

In 1949, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the School Plant Construction, Improvement, and Repair Fund, under which the state authorized the use of state bonds to fund public school construction, "an action that led to a significant wave of school construction during the decade that followed."<sup>78</sup> Under the new legislation, "money allocated to counties could not be used to build additions to structurally unsafe schools. The board also directed that 'there shall be a just and equitable expenditure of funds within the counties as between the races.'"<sup>79</sup> Thus, African American schools throughout the state, including those in Durham County were updated and expanded, "complete with the amenities that white schools already had, such as indoor plumbing and rooms dedicated to specialized use."<sup>80</sup>

Due in part to the proximity of the School of Design at North Carolina State College in Raleigh, the Modern style was preferred for new school construction in Durham during this period. The Modern style was nationally popular for the clean lines and unadorned facades that were able to provide light-filled interiors and to utilize steel-framing or load-bearing concrete-block construction, which led to lower construction costs than previous load-bearing brick structures. However, in North Carolina, the School of Design played an integral role in the promotion of Modern Architecture as the most appropriate style for new school construction. In October of

<sup>77</sup> Open Durham, "Mangum High School and Elementary School," [www.opendurham.org/buildings/mangum-high-school-and-elementary-school](http://www.opendurham.org/buildings/mangum-high-school-and-elementary-school) (accessed July 19, 2016).

<sup>78</sup> Mitchell, "Hillside Park High School", 19.

<sup>79</sup> Mitchell, "Hillside Park High School", 19.

<sup>80</sup> Mitchell, "Hillside Park High School", 19.

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1949, the school joined with the State Board of Education to hold a workshop for architects focused on the upcoming statewide school-building campaign.<sup>81</sup> "At these workshops, architects were encouraged to use glass for improved natural lighting, reduce ornamentation, and integrate the landscape, site, and building, principles that formed the foundation of modernism."<sup>82</sup> Further, in 1949, Edward "Terry" Waugh, of the School of Design, became supervisor of the state's Office of School House Planning, thereby reinforcing the architecture school's connection to educational building design in North Carolina.<sup>83</sup>

The rise in the popularity of the Modern style coincides with the growth of the Little River High School, which was enlarged significantly in the 1950s with a Modern-style high school classroom wing and gymnasium constructed in 1953 and 1954-55, and cafeteria and agriculture buildings constructed in 1957. The flat-roofed high school wing and cafeteria were both constructed with near-full-height, metal-framed windows on low brick knee walls to provide the maximum amount of light from the east and west elevations. The interior partitions, where the transfer of light was less important, were constructed of concrete block. The 1954-55 gymnasium features loadbearing concrete-block walls faced with brick and metal-framed clerestory windows, located between the exposed metal trusses that support the flat roof. The 1957 agriculture building is less overtly modern with a flat roof, brick veneer, high metal-framed windows, and concrete-panels flanking the windows on the south elevation. The 1957 cafeteria, originally designed to match the 1953 high school classroom wing, has been significantly altered with the replacement of the large groups of windows.

Other examples of Modern school architecture in the county are limited to schools within the Durham city limits. Among the Modern-style schools constructed in the 1950s were the 1953 Northern High School (117 Tom Wilkinson Road, Durham), the 1956 Southern High School (800 Clayton Road, Durham) (both constructed to consolidate earlier white schools in those parts of the city), as well as the 1957 Morehead School and the 1959 Brogden Middle School, also for white students. The 1922 Hillside Park High School (NR, 2013) (200 East Umstead Street, Durham), the first black high school in the county and located just south of Downtown Durham, received a Modern addition to the Classical Revival-style building in 1954-55, designed by Hackney and Knott architects, the architect of the 1939 portion of the Little River High School.<sup>84</sup>

Little River High School, constructed in a number of phases from 1939-1957, is the most complete early- to mid-twentieth century educational complex, for white or black students, in rural Durham County. Further, Little River High School is the only remaining brick school constructed for rural African American students in the county and one of only two extant schools constructed for rural African American students, the other being the 1927 frame Russell School (NR2009). The school represents an era of African American education from the consolidation of the rural schools in the 1930s through the integration period of the 1960s. The architecture of Little River High School illustrates the symmetrical massing and simple classical detailing of 1930s-era school buildings as well as the application of Modernism to mid-twentieth century schools.

<sup>81</sup> Mitchell, "Hillside Park High School", 19.

<sup>82</sup> Mitchell, "Hillside Park High School", 20.

<sup>83</sup> Mitchell, "Hillside Park High School", 20.

<sup>84</sup> It is unclear whether Hackney designed any of the additions to the Little River High School.



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### Additional UTM references:

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

1. Latitude: 36.147257	Longitude: -78.909062
2. Latitude: 36.147638	Longitude: -78.905994
3. Latitude: 36.147621	Longitude: -78.904932
4. Latitude: 36.143480	Longitude: -78.905661
5. Latitude: 36.143436	Longitude: -78.908751
6. Latitude: 36.145958	Longitude: -78.909363
7. Latitude: 36.145975	Longitude: -78.908569

### Verbal Boundary Description:

The National Register boundary is shown by a black line on the accompanying map, drawn at a 1"=200' scale.

### Boundary Justification:

The nominated parcel includes the 36.81 acres historically associated with the school.

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Durham County, North Carolina

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### PHOTOGRAPHS:

The following information pertains to all photographs:

Property Name: Little River High School

County and State: Durham County, North Carolina

Photographer: Cheri Szcodronski

Date: May 2016

Location of Negatives: State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, North Carolina

1. Little River High School – Main Building and Gymnasium  
facing northwest
2. Little River High School – Main Building and Elementary Wing  
facing northwest
3. Little River High School – Main Building and Elementary Wing  
facing northeast
4. Little River High School – Rear Wing of Main Building  
facing southeast
5. Little River High School – Auditorium, Rear Wing, and High School Wing  
facing south
6. Little River High School – Main Building, Typical Classroom  
facing south
7. Little River High School – Auditorium  
facing west
8. Little River High School – Elementary Wing, Typical Classroom  
facing north
9. Gymnasium  
facing southwest
10. Gymnasium  
facing northeast

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11. Cafeteria  
facing southeast

12. Cafeteria  
facing south

13. Agriculture Building  
facing northwest

14. Classroom Building  
facing northeast

15. Caretaker's House  
facing southeast



Little River High School, Bahama, Durham County, North Carolina









Image from Durham County GIS

Little River High School  
8307 North Roxboro Road, Bahama  
Durham County, NC

Tax Map with National Register Boundary  
 National Register Boundary

- |                        |                            |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1a. Main Building      | 2. Cafeteria (NC)          |
| 1b. Auditorium         | 3. Water Tower             |
| 1c. Middle School Wing | 4. Agriculture Building    |
| 1d. Elementary Wing    | 5. Classroom Building (NC) |
| 1e. High School Wing   | 6. Caretaker's House (NC)  |
| 1f. Gymnasium          | 7. Shed                    |
|                        | 8. Shed                    |

Scale: 1" = 200'





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2

